



CONNECTING NEIGHBORS

MDOT I-75 Ambassador
Bridge Gateway Project

WELCOME

May, June, July, August 2009

Issue 10

Welcome to the 10th edition of Connecting Neighbors, the newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date about MDOT's I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project. Did you know that Gateway is not the only important economic development project MDOT is working on in metro Detroit? Have you visited southwest Detroit lately and seen the progress that our construction crews are making on the signature Bagley Avenue pedestrian bridge? Look inside and for more, go to www.michigan.gov/gateway

Moving Michigan's Economy Forward: Projects and More Projects

MDOT has focused its attention on developing two other critical southeast Michigan-based projects: the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) and the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal (DIFT).

Each is complex, requiring years of work by MDOT staff from almost every department along with many local, national and international partners. In recent months, there have been fruitful collaborative efforts on all three projects:

The I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project is the only one of the three that is currently under construction. New ramps have been built that will move commercial traffic exiting the Ambassador Bridge directly onto area freeways without traveling through local streets. Sections of mainline I-75 and I-96 and bridges throughout the corridor have been reconstructed and a new, signature pedestrian bridge at Bagley Avenue is nearing completion. The project is ahead of schedule and 80% complete.

The Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC)

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been completed and a Record of Decision was received in January 2009 for a new international border crossing system. The Final EIS identifies the Preferred Alternative for a new border crossing system between Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario, consisting of a road connection from I-75 to a new U.S. border inspections plaza and a new bridge to Canada (X-10B in the Draft EIS).

The U.S. environmental clearance for this project began in 2005 and was completed in near record time. The Canadian Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed on December 31, 2008. The submission is currently under review by the Ministry of Environment, with approval expected later in 2009. The total estimated cost for the U.S. portion of the project is \$1.8 billion.

MDOT is working with Canada to establish a governance structure for the project. It is anticipated that there will be public ownership of the U.S. portion of the bridge and the highway interchange, and that the U.S. inspections plaza will be owned by the state of Michigan. It is expected that the government of Canada will own the Canadian portion of the bridge and the Canadian inspections plaza, while the province of Ontario will own the Canadian access road.

The preferred delivery mechanism for the bridge is a public-private partnership, in the form of a long-term concession agreement that will seek to maximize private-sector participation and financing to avoid the use of taxpayer dollars. The intent is for the bridge to be financially self-sustaining based on a reasonable toll assessed to its users.

Subsequent project phases including preliminary design and right-of-way acquisition will be initiated later this year, pending legislative approval and funding.



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The **Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal (DIFT)** project environmental clearance is nearing completion. Public meetings were held throughout the Detroit area last November to update citizens and businesses on the status of the project. The Environmental Impact Statement was started in 2003 and should be completed by mid-summer 2009.

This study will evaluate and recommend a regional freight terminal complex to serve shippers and industries in southeast Michigan. The purpose of the DIFT project is to improve freight transportation opportunities and efficiencies for business, industry and the military. Ensuring southeast Michigan has a regional facility or facilities with sufficient capacity and interconnectivity to provide for existing and future intermodal demand, will reduce time, monetary costs, congestion and support economic competitiveness.

A cost review of the DIFT project was held in early May. Following the completion of the environmental clearance process, the DIFT project can move into the design, real estate acquisition and construction phases as funding becomes available. The project is a public-private partnership between the participating railroads and the government and is estimated to cost \$650 million over a 10-year build-out period.

More information about the DIFT project can be found on MDOT's Web site at www.michigan.gov/mdot. Click "Projects and Program" then "Studies" then "DIFT Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal."

I-75 Scheduled to Open This July



Independence Day won't be the only thing that southwest Detroit residents and area commuters have to celebrate this summer. In early July, MDOT will open the I-75 freeway between Rosa Parks Boulevard and Clark Street in southwest Detroit. The one-and-a-half mile stretch of freeway has been closed for construction of the Gateway Project since late February 2008.

"We originally anticipated that this portion of the project would open sometime in the fall," said MDOT Metro Region Engineer Tony Kratofil. "However, construction on MDOT's portion of the project has been consistently ahead of schedule, making it possible to open the freeway months earlier than we predicted."

While mainline I-75 will be completely open to traffic, work on other areas of the Gateway Project will continue.

"We'll be working on a number of key ramps and bridges until the end of the year and have extensive landscaping to do before we wrap things up in the area," Kratofil continued. "Opening this segment of the project early is a major achievement that directly benefits both the immediate community and commuters. We thank local residents for their cooperation and compliment our engineers and construction crews for meeting this deadline ahead of time."

The I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project is a \$230 million economic development initiative that will help preserve Michigan jobs and retain the Detroit- Windsor border's status as the crossing of choice for international trade in North America.





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WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?



With the advent of warmer weather, there's news and more news at the Gateway construction site! To start with, work remains well ahead of schedule and overall the project is 80% complete. Reconstruction on mainline freeway I-75 is coming to a speedy conclusion. In late spring crews placed the cables on the east-west connecting Bagley Avenue pedestrian bridge. These photos take you right to the site and the column below, written by transportation reporter Tom Greenwood and reprinted from his Friday, April 3, 2009 Detroit News column, describes the action.

This cable guy is linking Mexicantown

Darrell Parks is a man who thrives on tension and suspension.

Parks is president of D.R. Parks Co., a "post tensioning" firm that installs steel cables for suspension bridges.



Parks' company is stringing steel for the graceful Bagley Avenue Pedestrian Bridge that arcs over Interstates 75 and 96 as part of the Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project.

The \$5 million bridge -- which rejoins the east and west sides of Mexicantown -- is a small but important part of the massive \$170 million Gateway Project, symbolizing the historic, cultural and economic rejoining of a vibrant section of southwestern Detroit.

The Gateway Project, which began construction in February 2008, will realign both interstates 75 and 96 to create new entrance and exit ramps to the Ambassador Bridge as well as the Mexicantown area, and will remove truck traffic from residential streets in southwestern Detroit.

According to MDOT, the project is under contract to be finished by December 2009, but is ahead of schedule and is almost 80 percent completed.

But Parks and his riggers are focused on the bridge perched over a stretch of freeway that carries 156,000 vehicles a day.

"And it's the only bridge of its kind in Michigan," said Parks of the 450-foot-long, 20-foot-wide bridge that straddles two busy freeways.

"There are 10 steel cables supporting the west portion of the bridge and five cables providing lift on the east side. There are also steel cables hidden inside the 15-story column."

For the past two weeks, Parks and his crew have been working six days a week, 10 hours a day to attach the sinewy steel support cables to the column that thrusts 150 feet up from the center of the span.

A ballet of engineering

Securing the wires to the column is a dangerous ballet of precision engineering that draws on the laws of physics, brute strength, bravery, beauty and the precise application of 300,000 pounds of tension per cable.

"We use three cranes to string the cables," said Parks, nodding toward a trio of massive machines that looked like they were part of a gigantic Erector set.

"One crane hoists two men in a basket to the summit of the 150-foot column so they can attach the cable. The other cranes lift the cable and inch it to the top of the column where the workers secure it in place with large stainless steel pins.

"Everything has to be very precise; you have to have the correct tension on all the cables or the column will be pulled out of alignment."

The cables inside the column -- which vary in length from 150-270 feet -- will be tightened only after all the outside cables have been installed. According to Parks, that should take about another week.

The tab for the design and construction of the unique bridge comes to about \$5 million.

Changing Places

There has been a dizzying round of key personnel changes in MDOT's Metro Region recently. Hold onto your hat and try to follow along ...



Greg Johnson Appointed Chief Operations Officer: First, the Metro Region said good-bye to Metro Region Engineer Greg Johnson who headed for Lansing to become MDOT's new Chief Operations Officer. (He replaced long-time MDOTer Larry Tibbits who retired.) Greg came to Metro in 2002 and served first as Deputy Region Engineer before moving up to the region's top job. In his new position, he oversees seven regions, the Bureau of Delivery, Bureau of Development, Office of Research and Best Practices, Safety and Security Administration, and the Office of Operations Administrative Services for MDOT.

Tony Kratofil Named Metro Region Engineer: Next, the Metro Region celebrated the return of Tony Kratofil who is the new Metro Region Engineer. (He replaced Greg Johnson who's now in Lansing.) In 2008, Tony left the Metro Region, where he was Deputy Region Engineer, to become MDOT's Bay Region Engineer. Now he's back in Metro. As Region Engineer, he will administer highway operations for the four-county region in southeast Michigan, including the operations of the Michigan Intelligent Transportation Systems Center and the Blue Water Bridge... (Are you still with me?)

Robert Ranck Named Bay Region Engineer: Then, the Metro Region said good-bye to Bob Ranck. For the past year, Bob served as Metro's Deputy Region Engineer. (He replaced Tony when Tony left for the Bay Region, remember?) Bob will be leaving to become (you might have guessed this already!) the new Bay Region Engineer. (That's right he's taking Tony's old job!) Bob will now manage the 13 - county region in east-central Michigan centered on the Saginaw Bay.

Paul Ajegba Named as Metro Deputy Region Engineer: And finally, Paul C. Ajegba has been named the new Deputy Region Engineer for the Metro Region. (Yes, he's replacing Bob who took Tony's old job in the Bay Region!) Paul isn't a stranger to Metro. For the past four years, he has served as MDOT Oakland TSC Manager and led his team through the delivery of some of the largest capital improvement projects in the state, including the reconstruction of the Lodge Freeway and the M-10 "Mixing Bowl" interchange with I-696.

That's it! Congratulations and Good Luck to All!

Prepared by: MDOT Graphics \OfficeOfCommunications\gateway Bridge\Gateway Bridge Issue 10 RLD • 1000 copies printed @ \$1.06 each for a total cost of \$1063.

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANSING, MI
PERMIT NO. 1200

MDOT Region Office
18101 West Nine Mile Rd.
Southfield, MI 48075

